

The following is my testimony, which I am submitting for the Public Health Hearing on Monday, March 17, 2014, concerning HB 5326 Physician-assisted Suicide.

Good afternoon, Members of the Public Health Committee,

When I was putting my thoughts together to try to say something meaningful and heartfelt today, I realized that I would have no trouble conveying the heartfelt part, but I wasn't so sure how to accomplish "meaningful." Then on Thursday of last week I came across something very meaningful, because it goes directly to the heart of the matter. (Of P.A.S.) A doctor named Kenneth Stevens, from Sherwood, Oregon feels deeply that this issue of Physician-assisted suicide was important enough to take the time to write a letter to the editor in the New Haven Register. He says in the letter ... "I was first exposed to this issue in 1982 shortly before my first wife died of cancer. We had just visited her doctor. As we were leaving, he had suggested that she overdose herself on medication. I still remember the look of horror on her face. She said, 'Ken, he wants me to kill myself.' "

He continues, "Our assisted suicide law was passed in 1997. In 2000 one of my patients was adamant she would use our law. Over three or four visits I stalled her and ultimately convinced her to be treated instead. Nearly 14 years later she is thrilled to be alive."

He states further, "In Oregon, the combination of assisted-suicide legalization and prioritized medical care based on prognosis has created a danger for my patients on the Oregon Health Plan, or Medicaid. HELPFUL treatments are often not covered. The plan WILL cover the patient's suicide." Doctor Stevens then provides an email address where we can learn many more details of his own experiences with this law. But the conclusion of his letter, and his admonition, is this: Protect your health care. Tell your Connecticut legislators to vote "NO" on assisted suicide. Don't make Oregon's mistake.

Feeling a little guilty because I did resort to using someone else's words in my testimony to get my point across, I will just add these few words which are my own heartfelt thoughts: Why do we feel the need to be "dumbing down" end-of-life and palliative care laws already in place in Connecticut? And lastly, why do we feel the need to upstage and outdo the laws of Almighty God concerning life and death issues?

Thank you,
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